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# Religious Affiliation and Participation among Immigrants in a Secular Society: A Study of Immigrants in The Netherlands

Frank van Tubergen

*This study examines the religion of immigrants who have moved from highly religious nations into a rather secular receiving context, the Netherlands. It is hypothesised that stronger social integration in Dutch society would diminish the religiosity of immigrants, as indicated by three religious variables: affiliation, attitudes, and attendance. In order to examine this idea, the study uses large-scale surveys of four immigrant groups (Turks, Moroccans, Surinamese and Dutch Antilleans) in the Netherlands in 1998 and 2002. The analysis shows that social integration indeed has the predicted negative effect on religiosity.*

**Keywords:** *Immigration; Integration; Religion; The Netherlands*

## Introduction

What happens to people's religious practices and beliefs as they move from one country to another? Questions about the religion of immigrants have gained recent interest in the literature, particularly in the United States as a response to increasing waves of immigration since the 1960s (Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000; Hurh and Kim 1990; Nelsen and Allen 1974; Vegler 1988; Warner and Wittner 1998). The study reported here contributes to the growing research on immigrants' religion in two ways.

First, it examines the religion of immigrants in the Netherlands, which is an interesting case from a theoretical perspective. Besides being a relatively new

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immigrant country, the Netherlands is one of the most secular nations in the world (De Graaf and Need 2000; Te Grotenhuis and Scheepers 2001). The central focus in this article is what happens to the religious commitment of immigrants when they become more socially integrated into a rather secular society. To examine this issue, I study the religiosity of immigrants from four highly religious nations: Turkey, Morocco, Surinam, and the Dutch Antilles. The general idea examined is that stronger social integration in Dutch society is inversely related to the religious commitment of immigrants.

Second, previous research on immigrants' religion has mainly been done on a small scale. Several authors have explained this by pointing out that the census of the United States does not contain questions on religion, and other national surveys do not contain enough immigrants to allow for any meaningful analysis (Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000; Van Tubergen 2006; Warner and Wittner 1998; Yang and Ebaugh 2001). This study uses large-scale surveys of four immigrant groups (Turks, Moroccans, Surinamese and Dutch Antilleans) in the Netherlands. The surveys are designed to study immigrant populations. Survey instruments were translated into the immigrants' language, and the resulting data contain detailed information on a variety of topics related to social integration and religion.

The focus in the present study is on the religiosity of first-generation (i.e. foreign-born) immigrants in the Netherlands in 1998 and 2002. Three dimensions of religion are examined: first, *religious affiliation*, whether people think of themselves as members of a religious community, denomination or religion; second, *religious attitudes*, including attitudes towards intermarriage of their own children with other religious groups and attitudes about secularisation in the Netherlands; and third, *religious participation*, the frequency with which people attend religious meetings.

## Theory and Hypotheses

### *Social Integration Theory*

Previous research has used Durkheim's (1951) social integration theory as a general idea from which to derive a series of hypotheses about religion (Need and De Graaf 1996; Te Grotenhuis and Scheepers 2001). Within this perspective it is argued that social settings or groups in which people participate influence their religious beliefs and practices. People who are strongly integrated into a social group are assumed to be more likely to comply with the norms of that group, including norms about religion (Stark 1994; Ultee *et al.* 1996; Van Tubergen *et al.* 2005).

There are a number of social settings that shape one's religious environment and are therefore important for determining one's religion (Kelley and De Graaf 1997; Myers 1996). Initially, people are predominantly affected by their family, in particular by the religiosity of their parents. Later in life, people are exposed to norms in school and to the ideas of their teachers. Furthermore, people acquire friends outside the family, and when they establish their own family, they are influenced by their partner.

People also interact with colleagues at work and with neighbours and are exposed to a variety of attitudes and norms through the media.

Social integration theory has been widely applied to the field of migration. According to the so-called 'accommodation hypothesis', the religious commitment of migrants tends to adjust to the religious context of the receiving region, thus increasing when migrants move to more religious destinations and decreasing when migrants move to more secular regions (De Vaus 1982). This hypothesis has been examined using data on regional migration, but results have been mixed (Bibby 1997; Finke 1989; Rebhun 1995; Smith *et al.* 1998; Stump 1984; Welch and Baltzell 1984; Wuthnow and Christiano 1979).

The present study uses social integration theory, and more specifically the accommodation idea, to develop a series of hypotheses on the religiosity of immigrants. In order to do so, two assumptions are made. First, it is assumed that the four origin countries considered here (Turkey, Morocco, Surinam and the Dutch Antilles) are more religious than the Netherlands. Figures show that in Turkey and Morocco about 99 per cent of the population is affiliated to a religion, and in Surinam and the Dutch Antilles about 90 per cent.<sup>1</sup> By contrast, in the Netherlands 42 per cent was affiliated to a religion in 1998 (Te Grotenhuis and Scheepers 2001), and in 1996 only 21 per cent attended church every week (Dekker *et al.* 1998). The Netherlands is now one of the most secular nations in the world (Campbell and Curtis 1994; De Graaf and Need 2000).

Second, I assume that the social settings can be either predominantly ethnic- or native-based, and, in turn, either inhibit or foster social integration in the Dutch society. When a social setting is predominantly ethnic-based, participation in that setting leads to more contacts with members from the ethnic community. In that case, social integration into the secular Dutch society is blocked and strong religiosity persists. Alternatively, when immigrants participate in a social setting that mainly consists of natives, they have more contacts with natives, leading to stronger social integration in the Dutch society and lower religious involvement. It is also possible that immigrants do not participate in a group at all. The religiosity of these immigrants probably falls between the two other extremes. They will be less influenced by their own (highly religious) ethnic community, but they will not be strongly affected by the (more secular) native Dutch either. Note that, in developing the hypotheses, I will be more concerned with contrasting ethnic *vis-à-vis* native participation.

### *Hypotheses on Specific Settings*

The first social setting I examine is the neighbourhood. It is well documented that immigrants in the Netherlands, as in most other countries, tend to cluster geographically (Tesser *et al.* 1999). In the literature, spatial concentration is considered to be an outcome of initial settlement patterns of immigrants in urban, lower quality neighbourhoods, followed by chain migration, high fertility levels, poor

language proficiency and limited upward mobility (Massey 1985). The spatial concentration of immigrants possibly has important consequences for their religious commitment. In areas with more members of their own group, people naturally have less opportunity to meet members of other groups. As a consequence, in ethnically concentrated areas, immigrants more often meet members of their own ethnic community and are less exposed to the more secular norms and values of the native Dutch. In addition, in more ethnically concentrated areas there are enough members to establish and maintain ethnic churches or mosques (Breton 1964). Such areas provide a strong religious community for the immigrant, in which social control is stronger than it is in areas with few co-ethnics. Therefore, I hypothesise that *the greater the concentration of immigrants from a specific group in the direct environment, the stronger the religiosity of the immigrants who are members of that group* (H1).

Non-religious voluntary organisations are other relevant social settings in a country. Immigrants could participate, for instance, in a choir, sports club, environmental organisation, or trade union. People join such organisations because they would like to fulfil certain goals, such as making music, playing soccer, or protecting the environment, that are more difficult or even impossible to realise on their own. However, next to this common goal and probably unforeseen, is that people are also exposed to the norms and values of other members of that particular organisation. In that respect, it is important to look at the ethnic composition of organisations. Organisations can be dominated by members of their own ethnic community, enforcing their religiosity, or by native Dutch, leading to lower religious commitment. Hence, I hypothesise that *immigrants who are members of organisations that are dominated by co-ethnics are more religious than immigrants who are members of organisations that predominantly consist of natives* (H2).

The family setting might also affect the religiosity of immigrants. Some immigrants are married before they arrived in the host country, some immigrants met a co-ethnic partner in the Netherlands, while others have a native Dutch partner. Although it is argued in the literature that people have a preference to marry a religiously similar spouse, marriage choice is also strongly determined by other factors, most notably by socio-economic status, structural opportunities to meet potential partners, and third parties, such as the family (Kalmijn 1998). Furthermore, it is generally assumed that the norms and values of the partner influence one's own opinions and behaviour, including one's religious commitment (Sherkat and Wilson 1995). The religion of immigrants presumably declines when immigrants marry a Dutch spouse, whereas religious commitment is strongly re-inforced by a co-ethnic spouse. Furthermore, because the network of the spouse is presumably ethnically homogenous, immigrants with an ethnic partner are more strongly integrated into their ethnic community and less involved in Dutch society than immigrants with a Dutch partner. It is therefore hypothesised that *immigrants with a co-ethnic partner will be more religious than immigrants with a Dutch partner* (H3).

I also study the influence of somewhat weaker ties, by looking at the ethnic composition of friendships relations. Some immigrants have mainly co-ethnic

friends, some more often interact with natives, and others have mixed contacts in their free time. It is hypothesised that *immigrants who have predominantly contacts with natives in their free time are less religious than other immigrants* (H4).

The work setting is possibly important as well. Among Turks, Moroccans, Surinamese, and Antilleans in the Netherlands, a large group is inactive in the labour market or unemployed (Tesser *et al.* 1999). It is well-known in the literature that people who are inactive or unemployed are more isolated and less integrated into society (Paugam and Russell 2000). Considering immigrants, day-to-day interactions with natives are presumably less common among those inactive or unemployed than for those who work. Hence, I hypothesise that *employed immigrants are less religious than immigrants who are unemployed or inactive* (H5).

The school setting provides another important social context. The interesting issue here is where immigrants obtained their education. Whereas most immigrants completed their educational career in their host country, some immigrants decide to invest in education after migration (Chiswick and Miller 1994). The reason for these post-migration investments is that the educational qualifications of the home country are difficult to transfer and not as equally valued as diplomas obtained in the host country (Friedberg 2000). As an unintended side-effect of attending school in the Netherlands, however, immigrants are also confronted with the secular attitudes of the Dutch population. Whereas those who completed their education in the country of origin were socialised in a rather religious worldview, immigrants who were educated in the Netherlands were exposed to the more secular norms of their classmates, peers and teachers. Hence, I hypothesise that *immigrants who have been educated in the Netherlands are less religious than immigrants educated in the country of origin* (H6).

### *Hypotheses on General Factors*

Next to considering characteristics that are specific to a certain setting—neighbourhood, family, school—I also hypothesise about the role of a number of factors that are *generally* associated with social integration. This includes aspects of social integration that are not directly measured by the characteristics discussed earlier, such as the usage of ethnic *vis-à-vis* Dutch media.

Potentially, education has such a general function in stimulating integration into Dutch society. It is suggested in the literature that more-highly-educated people have a more tolerant and open worldview, leading to lower attachment to their own ethnic community (Kalmijn 1998), and more social integration in the receiving society than less-well-educated immigrants (Dagevos 2001; Mol 1971). Based on these arguments, I hypothesise *a negative effect of level of education on religion* (H7).

Knowledge of the Dutch language is also a factor that generally fosters social participation in Dutch society. Immigrants with little command of the Dutch language naturally have more difficulty in interacting with natives, and are also less likely to be influenced by the Dutch media. Instead, they participate more often in

ethnic-specific settings, which tend to be more religious; the secular attitudes that dominate many Dutch social settings will not reach them. It is therefore hypothesised that *the better immigrants speak the Dutch language, the less religious they will be* (H8).

A final general factor associated with social integration has to do with the time immigrants were exposed to their country of origin and destination. People who migrated from religious nations at a young age, for example, would be less socialised in a religious nation. They would be less affected by religious instruction at school and less exposed to religious peers and the media in the country of origin. Instead, they would attend more secular schools, meet more secular peers, and have greater exposure to secular media. Hence, it is predicted that *age at time of migration has a positive effect on the religiosity of immigrants* (H9). Similarly, it is argued in the literature that, with the length of one's stay in the destination country, immigrants gradually become more integrated (Alba and Nee 2003; Gordon 1964). More specifically, it is argued that ethnic and religious attachments will diminish over time (Hurh and Kim 1990; Legge 1997). Hence, I hypothesise that *the longer their length of stay in the Netherlands, the less religious immigrants will become* (H10).

### *Hypotheses on Group and Gender Differences*

Because religious adherence is somewhat higher in Turkey and Morocco than in Surinam and the Dutch Antilles, social integration theory assumes that Turks and Moroccans who have migrated to the Netherlands will have been more strongly socialised religiously than Surinamese and Antilleans. This, in turn, will yield stronger religious attachment among Turks and Moroccans at the moment of entry into Dutch society than among Surinamese and Antilleans. Moreover, it is assumed that this difference in religious background persists over time in the Netherlands—that Turks and Moroccans are affected by members of their own groups, which provide a more religious social context than the groups from Surinam and the Antilles. For both reasons, it is hypothesised that *immigrants from Turkey and Morocco are more religious and attend religious meetings more often than immigrants from Surinam and the Dutch Antilles* (H11).

A final hypothesis is concerned with male–female differences in religious participation. The literature on the sociology of religion has documented that, in studies among native Christian populations, males tend to be affiliated with a religion less often than females and to attend religious meetings less frequently (De Vaus and McAllister 1987). In regard to Muslim communities, however, one might predict a different pattern. The official doctrine of Islam compels males to attend services at a mosque each Friday, but this is not required for females (Breuilly *et al.* 1997; Horrie and Chippindale 1990). In line with this doctrine, males in the Muslim communities in Turkey and Morocco have been found to attend religious meetings more often than females (Abdus Sattar 1993). Since I assume that immigrants bring their religious attitudes and practices along with them, I hypothesise that *male immigrants from Islamic countries, such as Turkey and Morocco, will attend religious meetings more often than their female counterparts* (H12).



## Data and Measurement

### Data

The data are from the Dutch survey 'Sociaal-economische Positie en Voorzieningegebruik van Allochtonen en Autochtonen' (SPVA), first conducted in 1988 and repeated in 1991, 1994, 1998 and 2002 (Martens 1999). SPVA is a large-scale, cross-sectional survey of the heads of households of four immigrant groups in the Netherlands (Turks, Moroccans, Surinamese and Antilleans), as well as a native reference group. People in cities were over-represented in the sample frame since most members of ethnic minorities live in cities. The sample frame consists of 10 to 13 cities (depending on the survey year), covering about 50 per cent of the four minority groups' population. The overall non-reponse rate was about 40 per cent—quite high compared to other countries, but common for survey research in the Netherlands. As of 1 January 2003, the Dutch population consisted of more than 3 million first- or second-generation immigrants, making up 19 per cent of the total population of 16 million (Statistics Netherlands 2003). The four groups examined in this study—Turks (340,000), Surinamese (320,000), Moroccans (295,000) and Dutch Antilleans (129,000)—are among the larger immigrant groups in the Netherlands. These groups have been over-sampled in order to provide sufficiently large numbers for detailed analysis. The data are of high quality, and researchers have used this survey to study a variety of aspects of immigrant integration. However, it was not until the last two rounds of the survey (i.e. 1998 and 2002) that respondents were intensively asked about their religion.

The data of this study are unique in the sense that large-scale surveys on immigrants' religion are rare (Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000; Van Tubergen 2006; Warner and Wittner 1998; Yang and Ebaugh 2001). However, a drawback of the data is that they are cross-sectional in nature, and therefore cannot be conclusive about the causality of the effects. As a consequence, some effects can be overestimated due to selection effects. For instance, the estimated effect of neighbourhood composition on religion ignores the possibility of reverse causation (e.g. more religious immigrants being more likely to settle in ethnic neighbourhoods than less religious immigrants), leading to an overestimate of its effect.

However, the consequences of unobserved selectivity and reversed causality should not be exaggerated. First, several hypotheses pertain to relationships of which the causality is difficult to problematise (e.g., gender, country of birth, age at migration, length of stay). Second, among relationships in which reversed causality could be possible, it should be emphasised that many processes examined here are not strongly selective along *religious* dimensions. For example, although religion can affect the decision to settle in a predominantly ethnic neighbourhood, residential choice is more strongly determined by other factors than religion, such as income, house prices, the quality of schools, and chain migration (Massey 1985; Tesser *et al.* 1999).

Therefore, to a large extent the composition of the neighbourhood has an independent effect on the religious practices of immigrants. Similar arguments apply to other relationships in which the causal direction may not be entirely one-way.

### *Dependent Variables*

Information on three measures of religiosity was collected.<sup>2</sup> Table 1 sets these out. First, *religious affiliation*: respondents were asked if they considered themselves members of a religious community, denomination, or religion, to which they could answer 'yes' or 'no'. Second, *religious attitudes*: respondents indicated on a five-point scale ('strongly disagree,' 'disagree,' 'do not agree or disagree,' 'agree,' 'strongly agree') to what extent they agreed with the following statements (here translated into English):

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics of dependent and independent variables; immigrants in the Netherlands in 1998 and 2002 (N = 6,929)

Variable	Range	Mean	SD
<i>Dependent variables</i>			
Religious affiliation	0/1	.88	.32
Religious attitudes	1–5	3.09	.89
Religious participation (linear)	0–52	18.00	23.09
Religious participation (ordered)	1–4	2.47	1.20
<i>Independent variables</i>			
Neighbourhood (per cent non-Western)	1.47–79.94	32.16	20.78
Membership organisation			
Ethnic	0/1	.13	.33
None	0/1	.74	.44
Native	0/1	.13	.34
Partner			
Ethnic	0/1	.51	.50
None	0/1	.41	.49
Native	0/1	.08	.27
Contacts in free time			
Ethnic	0/1	.30	.45
Mixed	0/1	.42	.49
Native	0/1	.29	.45
Employed	0/1	.52	.50
Educated in Netherlands	0/1	.13	.33
Education	0–7	2.37	2.06
Good language skills	0/1	.53	.50
Age at migration	0–79	22.88	11.09
Duration	0–70	19.02	9.81
Immigrant group			
Turks	0/1	.24	.43
Moroccans	0/1	.24	.43
Surinamese	0/1	.30	.46
Antilleans	0/1	.21	.41
Male	0/1	.58	.49

'It is regrettable that religion becomes less important in daily life in the Netherlands.'

'It is unpleasant when your *daughter* wants to marry someone from a different religion.'

'It is unpleasant when your *son* wants to marry someone from a different religion.'

'Children should attend a school affiliated with the same religion as their parents.'

Factor analysis shows that these four items form a single dimension. The answers were averaged, and the scale turns out to be reliable (Cronbachs alpha 0.74).

The third dependent variable is *religious participation*: respondents were asked how many times they attended religious meetings, including attendance at a church, mosque, a religious celebration, or religious service. Possible answers were (1) never, (2) several times per year, (3) several times per month, and (4) once a week or more. This variable is treated in the analysis in two different ways. First, I recoded the variable into the number of days people attend religious meetings per year. In doing so, I assumed that: (1) never = 0 days, (2) yearly = 1, (3) monthly = 12, and (4) weekly = 52. An advantage of this procedure is that the dependent variable is linear and has a clear interpretation. A drawback, however, is that the transformation was based on only four categories, and that the distribution is non-normal. Therefore, I also treated religious participation as an ordinal variable, using ordered logit regression with four categories. Although this regression technique yields better estimates, these results are more difficult to understand as well. Because these approaches have their pros and cons, I present the results for both.

### *Independent Variables*

The following variables were included in the analysis:

*Non-Western immigrants in the neighbourhood (per cent)*: Because specific information on the percentage of each group in the neighbourhood was not available, I used the percentage non-Western immigrants instead. Nevertheless, the group-specific measure strongly correlates with the variable used on non-Western immigrants. In additional analysis, not presented here, I used 548 small geographical units ('municipalities') for which group-specific information was available to compute the relationship at that higher level between per cent own group and per cent non-Western. The correlations were high for all groups: Moroccans (.72), Turks (.74), Surinamese (.82), and Antilleans (.70). Information on the composition of the neighbourhood is based on four-digit zip codes as of 1 January 1998, and was obtained from Statistics Netherlands (2003).

*Membership of organisation*: Respondents were asked whether they were a member of an organisation, and if so, whether the organisation(s) is (are) predominantly ethnic. Using that information, I constructed three categories: (1) not a member of an organisation, (2) member of predominantly ethnic organisations, and (3) member of native organisations.

*Partner:* Respondents' family situation was coded as follows: (1) single, (2) cohabiting with an ethnic partner, and (3) cohabiting with a Dutch partner.

*Contacts in free time:* Respondents were asked whether they had contacts with natives in their free time. I constructed three categories: (1) predominantly contacts with co-ethnics, (2) predominantly contacts with natives, (3) mixed contacts.

*Employed:* This variable measures the main activity of respondents. Those who have a job as their main activity (1) were contrasted with all others (2).

*Educated in the Netherlands:* Respondents were asked where they obtained their education. I include a dummy variable contrasting (1) those educated in the Netherlands with (2) other immigrants.

*Education:* This variable indicates the highest completed educational level, either obtained in the country of origin or in the Netherlands, ranked from low (no diploma) to high (university diploma) across eight different levels. It is treated as an interval variable, which is more parsimonious than including it as a categorical variable. Furthermore, the model fit is not significantly better when education is treated as a categorical variable (results not shown).

*Language proficiency:* Respondents were asked how much difficulty they have with speaking the Dutch language. I included a dummy variable in the analysis, contrasting those (1) never experiencing problems with speaking Dutch with those (2) mostly or always having problems with speaking Dutch.

*Age of migration:* The age at the time of migration is measured in years.

*Duration:* This variable indicates the length of time in the Netherlands, in years.

*Immigrant group:* I include three dummy variables indicating the ethnic groups (Turks, Moroccans, Surinamese, Antilleans).

*Gender:* I include a variable on gender.

## Results

The results of the regression estimates are presented in three different tables. Table 2 shows the findings of the binomial logistic regression analysis of *religious affiliation*. Table 3 presents the results of the linear regression analysis of *religious attitudes* (Model 1 and 2). Table 4 shows the results for *religious participation*, for which both linear regression methods (Model 1 and 2a) as well as ordered logit regression (Model 2b) are estimated. Because the results from the ordered logit regression are more difficult to interpret and they yield the same substantive conclusions, I discuss Model 2a rather than Model 2b.<sup>3</sup>

The first group of hypotheses pertains to specific settings. It was hypothesised that the greater the concentration of immigrants from a specific group in the direct environment, the stronger the religiosity of the immigrants who are members of that group (H1). The results generally support this hypothesis. Table 2 shows that the share of non-Western people in the municipality in which immigrants live has a positive effect on religious affiliation. The effect of neighbourhood composition is not substantial, though. More specifically, I find that, for a 1 per cent increase of non-

**Table 2.** Logistic regression of religious affiliation among immigrants in the Netherlands in 1998 and 2002 (N = 6,929)

	B	SE	Exp (B)
Neighbourhood (per cent non-Western)	.007**	(.002)	1.007
Membership organisation			
Ethnic	Ref.		1.000
None	-.420**	(.144)	.657
Native	-.513**	(.162)	.598
Partner			
Ethnic	Ref.		1.000
None	-.630***	(.100)	.533
Native	-.910***	(.134)	.402
Contacts in free time			
Ethnic	Ref.		1.000
Mixed	.205	(.122)	1.228
Native	-.048	(.127)	.953
Employed	-.208*	(.092)	.812
Educated in Netherlands	-.212	(.121)	.809
Education	-.084***	(.021)	.920
Good language skills	.009	(.108)	1.009
Age at migration	.043***	(.005)	1.044
Duration	.012*	(.005)	1.012
Immigrant group			
Turks	Ref.		1.000
Moroccans	.953***	(.225)	2.594
Surinamese	-1.458***	(.154)	.233
Antilleans	-1.458***	(.159)	.233
Male	-.374***	(.088)	.688
Constant	2.954***	(.284)	19.178
df	17		
-2 log likelihood	4061.113		
Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup>	.261		

Note: \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$  (two-tailed test).

Western people in the environment, the odds to be affiliated with a religion versus not increases by 1.007. Thus, a one standard deviation change in the per cent non-Western in a neighbourhood (i.e. 20.78, Table 1) leads to an increase in the odds of religious affiliation of only 1.16 (i.e.  $e^{0.007 \times 20.78}$ ). Table 3 shows that neighbourhood composition has no effect on religious attitudes, but according to Table 4 it does have the predicted positive effect on religious participation. In summary, I find support for hypothesis 1, but the effect is not substantial.

Hypothesis 2 stated that immigrants who are members of organisations that are dominated by co-ethnics are more religious than immigrants who are members of organisations that predominantly consist of natives. This hypothesis is clearly confirmed in the analyses of religious affiliation, attitudes and participation.

**Table 3.** Unstandardised coefficients of OLS regression of religious attitudes among immigrants in the Netherlands in 1998 and 2002 (N = 6,929)

	Model 1		Model 2	
Neighbourhood (per cent non-Western)	.000	(.000)	.000	(.000)
Membership organisation				
Ethnic	Ref.		Ref.	
None	-.039	(.029)	-.037	(.029)
Native	-.128**	(.038)	-.123**	(.038)
Partner				
Ethnic	Ref.		Ref.	
None	-.146***	(.023)	-.142***	(.023)
Native	-.290***	(.039)	-.279***	(.039)
Contacts in free time				
Ethnic	Ref.		Ref.	
Mixed	-.128**	(.024)	-.151***	(.024)
Native	-.252***	(.030)	-.248***	(.030)
Employed	-.074**	(.022)	-.081***	(.022)
Educated in Netherlands	-.010	(.033)	-.012	(.033)
Education	-.040***	(.005)	-.040***	(.005)
Good language skills	-.055*	(.024)	-.054*	(.024)
Age at migration	.003**	(.001)	.003*	(.001)
Duration	.000	(.001)	.000	(.001)
Immigrant group				
Turks	Ref.		Ref.	
Moroccans	.098***	(.028)	.183**	(.056)
Surinamese	-.432***	(.032)	-.279***	(.047)
Antilleans	-.327***	(.034)	-.159**	(.048)
Male	.012	(.022)	.189***	(.044)
Male* Moroccan			-.122	(.064)
Male* Surinamese			-.242***	(.056)
Male* Antillean			-.287***	(.061)
Constant	3.614***	(.059)	3.500***	(.064)
R <sup>2</sup> (adjusted)	.207		.210	

Note: \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$  (two-tailed test).

Table 2 shows that people who are members of a predominantly native organisation have a 1.67 lower odds of being affiliated with a religion (versus having no religion) than immigrants who are members of an ethnic organisation. The magnitude of the effect is equally strong when looking at religious attitudes and participation. For instance Table 4, Model 1 shows that, *ceteris paribus*, immigrants who are members of mainly ethnic organisations attend religious meetings six days per year more than immigrants who are members of native organisations (average attendance is 18 days per year, Table 1).

The partner influences immigrants' religious commitment as well. In line with hypothesis 3, I find that immigrants with a co-ethnic partner are more religious than immigrants with a Dutch partner. Ethnically homogenous immigrants have a 2.49

**Table 4.** Unstandardised coefficients of OLS regression and ordered logit regression of religious participation among immigrants in the Netherlands in 1998 and 2002 (N = 6,929)

	OLS				Ordered logit	
	Model 1		Model 2a		Model 2b	
Neighbourhood (per cent non-Western)	.028*	(.012)	.020	(.012)	.004***	(.001)
Membership organisation						
Ethnic	Ref.		Ref.		Ref.	
None	−6.148***	(.752)	−5.978***	(.732)	−.562***	(.071)
Native	−6.006***	(.983)	−5.631***	(.958)	−.525***	(.092)
Partner						
Ethnic	Ref.		Ref.		Ref.	
None	−4.897***	(.585)	−4.569***	(.570)	−.516***	(.054)
Native	−7.367***	(1.002)	−6.489***	(.978)	−.834***	(.096)
Contacts in free time						
Ethnic	Ref.		Ref.		Ref.	
Mixed	−.087	(.886)	−.110	(.594)	.022	(.057)
Native	−.449	(.554)	.256	(.740)	−.002	(.071)
Employed	−2.462***	(.554)	−3.035***	(.541)	−.209***	(.052)
Educated in Netherlands	−1.042	(.849)	−.902	(.827)	−.197*	(.080)
Education	−.668***	(.132)	−.656***	(.129)	−.056***	(.012)
Good language skills	−3.045***	(.623)	−2.948***	(.606)	−.204***	(.058)
Age at migration	.376***	(.028)	.341***	(.027)	.036***	(.003)
Duration	.314***	(.027)	.293***	(.027)	.028***	(.003)
Immigrant group						
Turks	Ref.		Ref.		Ref.	
Moroccans	1.117	(.710)	−8.915***	(1.392)	−1.208***	(.133)
Surinamese	−12.234***	(.811)	−6.419***	(1.168)	−.575***	(.109)
Antilleans	−6.288***	(.867)	1.107	(1.206)	.059	(.112)
Male	3.197	(.570)	8.374***	(1.107)	.722***	(.104)
Male* Moroccan			12.386***	(1.590)	1.491***	(.154)
Male* Surinamese			−10.918***	(1.393)	−1.099***	(.132)
Male* Antillean			−15.557***	(1.520)	−1.542***	(.144)
Constant	18.159***	(1.513)	15.716***	(1.610)		<sup>a</sup>
R <sup>2</sup> (adjusted)	.23		.27			
Nagelkerke pseudo R <sup>2</sup>					.31	

Notes: \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$  (two-tailed test); <sup>a</sup>Thresholds of model: 1 (no participation) = −.888; 2 (yearly) = .561; 3 (monthly) = 1.348.

higher odds of religious affiliation than immigrants with a Dutch spouse. Furthermore Table 3, Model 1 shows that immigrants married with a co-ethnic score 0.29 higher on the religious attitudes scale (ranges 1–5, mean 3.09) than immigrants who are married to natives. This means that they more often oppose religious intermarriages of their children, and more strongly regret the secularisation of Dutch society. Table 4 shows that ethnic homogamy is also associated with

attending religious meetings more frequently. Immigrants with a co-ethnic partner attend religious meetings seven days per year more than those married to a native.

I find weak support for the hypothesis that immigrants who have predominantly contacts with natives in their free time are less religious than other immigrants (H4). Table 2 reports no significant differences on religious affiliation and Table 4 shows no significant results for religious participation either. However, I do find that immigrants who have mainly contacts with natives in their free time have significantly less religious attitudes than immigrants who predominantly meet co-ethnics. One reason for not finding significant results for religious affiliation and participation is that in the multivariate models strongly related variables are included (i.e. per cent non-Western neighbourhood, membership of organisation, partner), suppressing the effect on contacts in free time. Indeed, bivariate analyses (results not presented here) including only contacts in free time show that those who have mainly contacts with natives have a lower odds of being affiliated to a religion, have fewer religious attitudes and attend religious meetings less frequently.

According to hypothesis 5, employed immigrants are less religious than immigrants who are unemployed or inactive. This hypothesis is supported in the analyses of religious affiliation, attitudes and participation. However, the magnitude of the effects is quite small. For instance, Table 2 shows that the odds to be affiliated with a religion (versus not) is 0.812 compared to those who are unemployed or inactive. Thus, although the employment setting has an influence on religious commitment, its role is rather modest.

Another potentially important setting is the school. It was hypothesised that immigrants who have been educated in the Netherlands are less religious than immigrants educated in the country of origin (H6). Surprisingly, however, this hypothesis receives only some support with respect to religious participation (Table 4, Model 2b). However, bivariate analyses show the predicted effect (analyses not shown), which indicates that, because of the strong association with other social integration variables, there is not enough statistical power to become significant.

The second group of hypotheses refers to characteristics that are generally related to social integration. It was hypothesised that the level of education has a negative effect on religion (H7). This hypothesis is confirmed in all models. However, the size of the effect is not very strong. For example, using the range of education, Table 4, Model 1, shows that people with a university education (category 7) attend religious meetings almost five days less than those with no educational qualification (category 0).

Hypothesis 8 stated that immigrants who are more proficient in the Dutch language are less religious. The hypothesis is confirmed with respect to religious attitudes and participation, but not with respect to religious affiliation. Thus, people who speak better Dutch have fewer religious attitudes and attend religious meetings less often than those with poorer command of the Dutch language.

The results show that time plays an important role in the religious commitment of immigrants. It was hypothesised that age at time of migration has a positive effect on the religiosity of immigrants (H9). This hypothesis is supported. People who arrived



in the Netherlands at a higher age are more often affiliated with a religion, have more religious attitudes, and attend religious meetings more frequently than immigrants who came at a younger age.

Similarly, it was hypothesised that the longer their length of stay in the Netherlands, the less religious immigrants will become (H10). This hypothesis is not supported in the present analysis. It appears that length of stay in the Netherlands has no effect on religious attitudes; indeed, length of stay if anything tends to affect religious affiliation and religious participation positively. Thus, contrary to expectations, the results show that immigrants who have lived for a longer time period in the Netherlands are more religious.

The third group of hypotheses is related to group and gender differences. According to hypothesis 11, immigrants from Turkey and Morocco are more religious than immigrants from Surinam and the Dutch Antilles. Because the meaning of the coefficients for the immigrant groups changes when interactions between group and gender are included, Model 1 (Tables 3 and 4) is relevant here with respect to religious attitudes and religious attendance. The analysis confirms the predicted pattern. Turks and Moroccans are more often affiliated with a religion, have stronger religious attitudes, and attend religious meetings more frequently than Surinamese and Antilleans. Descriptive analysis (not presented) shows that, among the Turks, 94 per cent are affiliated with Islam; among Moroccans this is true for 98 per cent. Of the Dutch Antillians, 73 per cent are Christian (mainly Catholics), and 22 per cent report no affiliation with a religion. The most diverse group are immigrants from Surinam: 42 per cent are Christian, 27 per cent are Hindu, 10 per cent are Muslim and 20 per cent have no religion.

It is important to emphasise that the variable for ethnic groups is highly significant in all models (not presented here), and that the differences between the groups are pronounced. For instance, Table 2 shows that immigrants from Surinam and the Dutch Antilles have a (1/.233) 4.29 lower odds of being affiliated with a religion than Turks. Similarly, Table 4 shows that Turks attend religious meetings six days per year more than Antilleans and 12 days per year more than Surinamese.

It was also hypothesised that Turkish and Moroccan males would attend religious meetings more often than their female counterparts. For this hypothesis, we have to look at the interaction effects presented in Table 3 (Model 2) and Table 4 (Model 2a and 2b). Again, the analysis supports the hypothesis: this study finds that Turkish and Moroccan males attend religious meetings more often than females. Note that the reverse pattern is found among Surinamese and Antilleans: males participate less often than females.

## **Conclusions and Discussion**

This study uses social integration theory to come up with hypotheses on the religiosity of immigrants. The general idea is that less involvement in their own (highly religious) ethnic community and stronger integration into the (more secular)

Dutch society would result in less religious affiliation, fewer religious attitudes, and less frequent religious attendance. To test this idea, a series of hypotheses were developed on the role of different social settings, such as organisations, neighbourhoods, family, work and schools. In addition, hypotheses were formulated on factors that generally promote social integration and on the influence of the immigrant group and gender.

Large-scale survey data on four immigrant groups in the Netherlands generally support the hypotheses. Immigrants who are members of native-based organisations, who live in predominantly native neighbourhoods, who have a Dutch partner, who are employed, who have a higher education, who speak the Dutch language better, and who arrived in the Netherlands at an early age, are less religious than other immigrants. In addition, I find that immigrants from Turkey and Morocco are more religious than immigrants from Surinam and the Dutch Antilles. Finally, I find evidence to suggest that male–female patterns of religious participation among Turks and Moroccans correspond to official Islamic doctrine and to practices observed in Turkey and Morocco: males attend religious meetings more frequently than females. For Surinamese and Antilleans, the opposite pattern was found: males attend religious services less often than females, which is found in earlier studies among mainly Christian populations.

However, this study found one intriguing anomaly. The analysis suggests that, with length of residence in the Netherlands, the religiosity of immigrants becomes stronger. Such a relationship was found for religious affiliation and religious participation. Not only does this finding provide a counter-example to social integration theory, it also represents an anomaly for the well-known assimilation hypothesis, which assumes a gradual absorption of immigrants into the host society over time (Alba and Nee 2003; Gordon 1964; Hurh and Kim 1990; Legge 1997). There are three possible explanations, all of which call for further research.

First of all, the assumption that over time immigrants become more integrated into Dutch society could be incorrect. Instead, it is possible that either there is not much of an increase in social integration into Dutch society over time, or integration into one's own ethnic community increases more. Possibly, migration breaks social ties with the religious network in the country of origin and it takes time for migrants to get adjusted and to find a new religious community that suits their preferences (Bibby 1997). Although this argument possibly explains an increase in immigrants' religious participation over time, it is less plausible in explaining changes in people's affiliations—which are not constrained by structural forces. Furthermore, this argument seems to be at odds with the strong support found in this article for social integration theory.

A second, more convincing, explanation is that the effect of length of stay in the Netherlands on religiosity is in fact an immigrant cohort effect. That is to say, with the cross-sectional design adopted here length of stay equals immigrant cohort. For instance, people who participated in the 2002 survey and arrived in the Netherlands in the year 1960 or the year 1980, have been in the country for about 42 and 22 years,

respectively. Because secularisation presumably also occurred in Turkey, Morocco, Surinam and the Dutch Antilles, migrants who recently migrated are, at the moment they enter the Netherlands, less religious than those who migrated a longer time ago. With cross-sectional surveys that are not far apart in time, such as the ones used here (i.e. 1998 and 2002), it is impossible to disentangle these duration and cohort effects. This is a well-known problem in the literature on economic assimilation (Borjas 1985), and is usually solved by pooling cross-sectional surveys that are far apart in time or by relying on panel data. Further research can use these empirical strategies to disentangle the effect of length of stay and cohort differences.

The third, equally sound, possibility is that the positive effect of duration on religiosity comes down to a more general positive effect of age on religiosity. It has been well documented in the literature that religiosity increases with age (Argue *et al.* 1999; Campbell and Curtis 1994). In regard to immigrants, this age pattern consists of two components: duration of residence in the country of origin ('age at migration') and duration of residence in the country of destination ('duration'). This study showed that both age at migration and duration have a positive effect on religion. Perhaps these findings indicate that the general age-related change in religiosity applies equally to immigrants. Because age is mathematically dependent on age at migration and length of stay, it seems impossible to examine this issue empirically. However, there are other options. On a theoretical level, the expected effect of length of stay indicates the degree to which immigrants are exposed to more secular norms and values. If the social integration theory is true, one would hypothesise that the children of immigrants, who are born in the host country, are more exposed to such norms than their parents, leading to an intergenerational process of secularisation. In view of the growing demographic importance of second-generation immigrants in Western countries (Portes 1996), examining the religious commitment of the offspring of religious immigrants in more secular societies is especially relevant.

## Notes

- [1] Statistics on the religious population of Surinam, the Dutch Antilles, Turkey and Morocco are obtained from a number of sources, summarised on [www.adherents.com](http://www.adherents.com).
- [2] Variables that are comparable between religions were chosen. Perhaps mosques have more of a social function than churches, but both Islam and Christianity prescribe the attending of religious meetings on (at least) one fixed day a week. There are other indicators of religiosity, which are more directed towards Islam but less comparable to Christianity. Islam is said to be more a way of living than Christianity, and it includes specific directives for daily life. Research on the Islamic faith could use the *fikh* doctrine as a starting point, according to which human behaviour can be divided into five categories, ranging from prohibited (*haram*), such as eating certain foods, to obligatory (*fard*), such as conforming to the Five Pillars of Islam.
- [3] Note that, because too few respondents had no religious affiliation, interactions between sex and immigrant group could not be computed for that measure; however, such interactions are presented for religious attitudes and religious participation.

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